THE RAGTIMER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1974

PUBLISHED BY

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

NOTICE OF DELETION FROM MARCH 1974 CATALOGUE

CM-642 - Tiger Rag (ODJ Band) Piano Arrangement (Thurban) 1935
(See Page 7 - This sheet music number is no longer available.)

RECORDS FOR SALE

As a service to members, THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC., is currently in a position to accept orders for the following records. Price includes charge for postage.

EUBIE BLAKE MUSIC - $6.00 each

	EBM-1	Eubie Blake Featuring I. H. Browning
	EBM-2	Eubie Blake : Rags to Classics
	EBM-3	Eubie Blake and His Friends
	EBM-4	Sissle & Blake : Early Rare Recordings
*	EBM-5	Eubie Blake/Live Concert
*	EBM-6	Eubie Blake introducing Jim Hession

BIOGRAPH - $7.50 each (Piano roll recordings)

*	BLP-1013Q	Scott Joplin : The Entertainer
*	BLP-1014Q	Scott Joplin : Elite Syncopations

BLUE GOOSE - $7.50 each (Piano Solos)

*	3002	Rompin' Stompin' Ragtime : Dave Jasen

FOLKWAYS - $7.50 each (various novelty piano artists)

*	RF24	Ragtime Piano Interpretations : Compiled by Dave Jasen

* SEE RECORD REVIEW in this issue of THE RAGTIMER.

****

SHEET MUSIC FOR SALE - COLLECTOR'S ITEMS

Our unreplaceable stock of the following music is gradually coming to an end. They are the original large-size printings of Colorful Sheet Music in clean fresh condition. Apart from their musical worth, they offer the perfect framed conversation-piece wall mountings. If you are interested, get your copies before the supply is exhausted:

CM-637	Dynamite Rag (Biese-Klickman) 1908	$2.50
CM-638	Louisiana Rag (Block) 1911	$2.50
CM-639	Turkish Trophies Rag (Sara B. Egan) 1907	$2.50
CM-640	Wedding Bells Rag (Coney) 1910	$2.50

(Prices include postage.)

FOUNDED 1962
INCORPORATED 1970

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non - profit corporation having the following objects:

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 1975 IN - THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. - NOW

USE THE ATTACHED RENEWAL FORM

THE LAST ISSUE OF THE RAGTIMER

BEING MAILED TO 1974 MEMBERS WILL BE THE COPY FOR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1974

RAGTIME . . . UNDER YOUR HAT

The new year of 1975 is fast approaching. We want to be ready by having all membership renewals in hand for next year before the first issue of THE RAGTIMER for 1975 is mailed out (JAN. /FEB.). We repeat a notice contained in the May/June 1974 issue of THE RAGTIMER as a reminder:

" The Society membership cards and revised catalogue for 1975 will be sent out with the January/February 1975 issue of THE RAGTIMER. In the past we have waited until the March/April issue mailing to allow extended time for renewal. Please help us with our planning. The November/ December 1974 issue of THE RAGTIMER will be the last one sent out to 1974 members. Your 1975 renewal will be requested in time to reach us before the end of the year. Some members have already renewed for 1975 and are not affected by the changeover. "

When renewals are late they make a lot of extra work for our already overburdened and precious donated-time help. It is frustrating to process the termination of a membership, only to find that a few weeks after the cut-off date the procedure must be reversed with the belated arrival of a renewal. We all know everyone has good intentions, but sometimes it is so easy to put off doing that special something promptly, which could have lightened the other fellow's load.

Having so said it, we hope you are sufficiently moved to take immediate steps to renew your membership for 1975. (SEE RENEWAL FORM ATTACHED TO THIS ISSUE

(Continued on Page 4)

THE RAGTIMER is the official publication of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY Inc., P. O. Box 520, Weston, Ontario, Canada, M9N 3N3. All rights of THE RAGTIMER are reserved to the Corporation. Membership is $5. 00 per year and includes all issues of THE RAGTIMER published during the current year.

OF THE RAGTIMER.) In turn you have our thanks for your cooperation.

Words of appreciation are due to the many members who kept us informed of ragtime events and happenings over the past year. Informative letters, articles and clippings sent in by members form the base for selecting material for publication in THE RAGTIMER. We are encouraged by the growth in the number of new members we have welcomed this year. If we put it all together, it is YOU, the members, who make THE RAGTIME SOCIETY worthwhile, from our honorary life member Dr. James Hubert (EUBIE) Blake to the latest of our new members.

IDAMAY MACINNES our SOCIETY president, in a recent telephone conversation with MARION and EUBIE BLAKE, learned more about the doctorates that are being heaped on the dean of ragtimers, our very own EUBIE BLAKE. He has now had five conferred on him, with others standing in line as time permits. All are honorary degrees directed at a recognition of his enormous contribution to American Music over 75 years of active involvement. Starting with May of this year the most recent are Doctor of Fine Arts from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J., Doctor of Music from New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, Mass., and Doctor of Humane Letters from Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H. In behalf of all our members we send warm and hearty congratulations to EUBIE for the well-deserved respect which has been shown. Then, too, on August 17th the Governor of Vermont, at Woodstock, presented a citation to SISSLE and BLAKE for their combined contribution to The Music of America.

There is good news for piano roll users. We hear that MAX MORATH recently cut six piano rolls for Q. R. S. In addition to some of his own compositions, we understand "The Entertainer" and "Cottontail Rag" were included. Watch for these in future new releases by Q. R. S.

The RECORD REVIEW by TEX WYNDHAM is in a special format for this issue. We should all rejoice at the problem TEX is having. However we leave it to TEX to tell you about it.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the next big event is our 10th ANNUAL BASH to be held at CARA INN, TORONTO on the weekend of SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19th, 1974. Director BILL McCROSTIE reports that arrangements for another big success are well advanced. REMINDER: SEE REGISTRATION FORM, AND DETAILS WITH THE RAGTIMER JULY/AUGUST 1974 (pages 3, 4 & 5).

****

RAGTIME - THE ASTONISHING BOOM

(Written by Charles Wilford who was writing about Ragtime as early as 1944 for a European readership. Taken from England's JAZZ JOURNAL AND JAZZ & BLUES for May 1974. The article was drawn to our attention by Ben Conroy, Jr. of Austin, Texas.)

"So ragtime has come big at last. Seventy years on, The Entertainer has emerged as front runner and reached 'hit-single' status. The radio waves vibrate with ragtime, music publishers rush into print with panic folios of numbers they have ignored for fifty years,

queues form in the record shops, pianolas are recorded in stereo, and one's musical friends discuss Scott Joplin and his works with such airy knowledge you'd hardly guess they first heard the name two months ago.

We always thought these forgotten men would one day climb from oblivion into their rightful place in the line of musical development, but we didn't imagine it would balloon into a nine-day wonder. Yet it hasn't all happened suddenly; there has been a steady and consistent build-up of world interest over many years.

At the time I first wrote of ragtime in 1944, even the all-time big-seller Maple Leaf Rag had never been published in this country. (We skipped the ragtime period and landed feet-first in the jazz age). It wasn't more than another two or three years before that was rectified, and Darewski's teetered into print with the valuable property that had lain for so long at the back of their safe. And the traditional jazz bands like Chris Barber's began adding rag and cake-walks to their jazz repertory and making known again the formal themes and square-cut rhythms of the golden years before World War One.

There is no doubt the biggest stimulus to the ragtime revival was the publication in 1950 of They All Played Ragtime by Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis. For this splendid work of scholarship the authors hunted out and interviewed the surviving musicians with first-hand knowledge of the ragtime era, including composers Joseph Lamb, Arthur Marshall and Artie Matthews, researched and wrote the lives of Joplin and the other pioneers, and gave comprehensive listings of the works of all the leading composers. This work remains an irreplaceable reference book, the bible of the ragtime enthusiast.

The somewhat sordid factor that lies behind the present boom is the expiry of all copyright in Joplin's works in 1967, fifty years after his death. This turned the Joplin compositions into a mine that can be dredged free-of-charge by anyone wanting cut-price background music for film or stage or radio.

Copyright freedom was quickly followed by the New York City Public Library's excellently-printed edition of Scott Joplin's 'complete' piano works, which appeared in 1971, spoiled only by the mysterious omission of Fig Leaf Rag, Rose Leaf Rag, and Searchlight Rag for some legal considerations.

Some years earlier, in 1963, Max Morath (with a cavalier attitude to the copyright jungle) had published his collection of 100 Classics of Ragtime, a fine cross-section of all the sheet music one really needs to know; this compilation preserves a realistic balance between the principal composers, having 26 Joplin numbers to 19 by James Scott and 11 by Joseph Lamb. This volume must have enabled many thousands of pianists to acquire a perspective view of the ragtime era.

The Joplin Blanket

In Spite of Morath's comprehensive publication, there is no doubt that the impression abroad in the popular mind is that Joplin is the only authentic ragtime composer, a unique phenomenon. Any pianist who has played the numbers (well, almost any pianist!) knows that this is not so; that one of the fascinating aspects of ragtime is the wide spread of styles that can be found within this one narrow field, from the primitive and folksy to the fully-

developed and jazzy, from the negroid to the scholarly; and that although Joplin is the founding master, the best works of Scott and Lamb are his equal in stature.

This pre-eminence of Joplin has no doubt arisen because in a newly-discovered art his has been the only name known to journalists and the media men; no doubt linked with the aforementioned fact that as Joplin died at the early age of 48 his work has come into the public domain earlier than his rivals.

Rifkin, This is too much

Further impetus to the Joplin band-wagon has been given by a young American pianist Joshua Rifkin, who plays nothing else (at least in public) and whose records have been remarkably successful. Rifkin plays in a highly idiosyncratic way, very carefully, with excellent attention to tonal control, giving full weight to the wistful melodic content of some Joplin compositions. At the same time he cuts down the rhythmic content, softens the sharp edge of the syncopation, and seems to suppress any negroid elements.

For some of us who have had the numbers on our piano desks for a good many years, Rifkin's playing is altogether too bland and reverential. He treats Joplin as a Romantic composer, plays as if he were playing Schumann. In actual fact, Joplin was the contemporary of Debussy, Satie and Ravel (all of whose works show the influence of ragtime).

In playing ragtime, one of the great difficulties for most professional pianists is too avoid being too jazzy. Ragtime needs to be played with a deliberate obliteration of all knowledge of developments since 1914, to achieve a genuine style. However, to play it without knowledge of developments since 1850 seems to be going altogether too far ...

Rifkin has been publicized as a trained musician, a musicologist and graduate of a well-known music school. He must be credited with knowing precisely what he is doing. He certainly deserves all credit for promoting the music at the right moment, and for the tremendous success his records have achieved in bringing Joplin to public attention. And there is no doubt that his melodious playing has great appeal to the general public.

Of course, Rifkin is fully entitled to interpret Joplin's compositions in his own way. If I find it necessary to take issue with him, it is because there is a danger of his highly-personal style becoming regarded as in some way 'correct', the right and only way to play ragtime.

I fear that my old colleague Charles Fox, in his fascinating series of programmes on Ragtime for Radio 3, must bear responsibility for some of this undue acceptance of the Rifkin style. Simply because they were available, excessive use was made of the Rifkin recordings as musical illustrations for this series. For programmes of this scope, and from an organization of the status of the BBC, I feel that a competent pianist should have been hired to play illustrations from the original scores.

The Authentic Style

Fortunately, there are many correctives we can apply to gain a more authentic impression of how the music was actually performed during the ragtime era, by its originators. The first decade of this century is not so long ago that we do not have available

reminiscences and even recordings of those who lived through the formative years of ragtime. Many of the early jazz pianists' styles were formulated during the classic period, including James P. Johnson (who was 24 years old in 1914) and Jelly-Roll Morton (aged 29 in 1914). Most important of all, there are the piano rolls cut by Scott Joplin himself, and also by other composers of the period, which have been made available on LP.

I would urge my readers to listen with care to these performances by the composers themselves, and make their own comparison with the Rifkin recordings and the interpretations of the many other pianists who can be heard playing the music at the present time.

There are some aspects which are matters of fact, not of interpretation: -

Item: Concert Performance. Scott Joplin was a self-taught musician, in no way academically trained. Joshua Rifkin has said that he regards Joplin's piano compositions as intended for the concert hall; but there is no evidence at all that Joplin regarded them in this light. Joplin is never known to have organized a piano recital of his compositions, although this would have been infinitely easier to arrange than the performances he achieved for his operas. His publications were essentially for playing in the home, at a time every self-respecting parlour contained a piano, and they were frankly written for the sheet-music sales. (Over a million copies of Maple Leaf were sold - John Stark wrote in one of his colourful publishers' blurbs: 'There will be a temporary stop to its sale when every family in the civilized world has a copy'.)

Item: Pedalling. Rifkin gains sonority but blurs the ragtime rhythms by excessive use of the sustaining pedal. Instead of the sharp alternation of bass-note and off-beat in the left hand as written, almost throughout he uses the pedal to sustain the bass-note underneath the following off-beat. Now, Joplin's later publications carry clear pedalling instructions, and this is not the effect he wanted. It can be confirmed from the piano rolls that Joplin did not perform in this way. If he wanted the effect of a sustained crotchet bass-note, Joplin was quite capable of writing it down - indeed he especially does so on occasion, as in The Sycamore.

Item: Tempi. It is well known that Joplin constantly marked his compositions 'Do not play this piece fast', or 'Play a little slow'. But there is a difference between Slow, Dead-Slow, and Stop, and sometimes Rifkin's tempi are so slow as to allow the music to fall apart. It seems likely that Joplin's encouragement of slow performance was partly for the benefit of the sheet-music sales, so that amateur pianists should not be put off by the complexity of the music.

Fortunately, this again is not wholly a matter of opinion, for some of Joplin's music carries metronome markings. Fig Leaf Rag for instance is marked Slow March Tempo, with a metronome indication of 100 crotchets per minute. This gives a clear indication of what Joplin had in mind by slow march tempo, and is equivalent to 19 seconds for each 16-bar strain. Rifkin's recording of Fig Leaf Rag takes 30 seconds for each strain.

Today's Pianists

The classic ragtime piano style was kept alive over two decades ago by Wally Rose of the Yerba Buena band, and the brilliant Ralph Sutton (playing solo and also in the Tony Parenti Trio). It is pleasing to find that by some strange international chemistry the gift

of ragtime playing has at last crossed the Atlantic, so that many pianists can be heard playing it with ease and affection - which was by no means the case twenty years ago. There are a number of pubs and restaurants scattered across London where Ragtime Piano is the regular entertainment. And there are rumours of several LPs in the pipe-line, no doubt being rushed out to catch the craze.

It would be impossible to give space to all the pianists, even if I were acquainted with them all, but mention must be made of the brilliant Ron Weatherburn, a jazz-oriented pianist who can perform ragtime with remarkable clarity, often at a very fast tempo; his young brother, twenty-year old John Weatherburn, who plays very similarly but confines himself more strictly to a ragtime style; and Keith Nichols (like Rifkin an academically-trained musician), a splendid stride pianist in the James P. Johnson manner, but who can also play strict ragtime and carries in his head a prodigious repertoire of rags. Nichols has at last ended a long-standing complaint of mine by giving the first performance I've ever heard of Lamb's beautiful Ragtime Nightingale.

'Try This Over On Your Piano'

Although it is always good to listen to a skilled ragtime pianist, the music was intended for home performance and anyone who can play the piano at all, or perhaps has dim memories of lessons received as a child, is recommended to try playing these compositions for himself. There is an especial pleasure in feeling these distant syncopations coming to life again under the fingers. Remember that a decent piano can still be bought for the price of a colour television set; and that ten years hence, when the television is a throwaway, the piano will be worth more than it is today. Furthermore, the piano still keeps working when the electricity goes off!

Shortage of music at least is no problem, unlike those early years when I had to copy music out by hand from the British Museum files.

The incomplete Complete Piano Works of Scott Joplin, imported from New York for 5.40 pounds currency will be more than most require. At the other end of the scale, Chappell have brought out a British print of The Entertainer alone, a splendid newly-engraved edition for 30 p; they have inscribed this, with what I take to be a sort of naive cunning, as 'Copyright 1974 by Chappell & Co. Ltd.' Well, whether or not the engraving is copyright, the music certainly isn't; this is no new arrangement, but an exact transcription of the 1902 edition, with every expression-mark in its original place, the only difference I can detect being the omission of the dedication 'To James Brown and his Mandolin Club'. But surely Chappell are not seriously claiming rights in a Non-Mandolin Club version?

Chappell have also released an album of 12 numbers, again newly-engraved, which at 1.25 pounds currency constitutes better value. American imports currently on the book-stalls include The Best of Scott Joplin (Shattinger International Publications), seventeen good numbers for 2.00 pounds currency. These are rather blurry photo-copies of the originals, but include most attractive colour versions of the original covers, and are worth separating from their spiral binding into the individual numbers. Scott Joplin, King of Ragtime (Lewis Publishing Co.), also at 2.00 pounds currency, has thirty-five numbers in very good quality photo-copy, but includes a variety of the songs, marches and waltzes, and does

not constitute a first-class selection. These two American editions both claim 'International Copyright Secured', which conjures up a happy image of a punch-up developing at a confrontation between rival groups of publishers.

Latest in the field are Paxton with another newly-engraved British print: eight excellent numbers for 60p, which must constitute the best buy, Maple Leaf, Entertainer, Ragtime Dance, Gladiolus, the elusive Fig Leaf, Scott Joplin's New Rag, Euphonic Sounds, and Magnetic Rag. Paxton are unique in not making any claim to own the copyright.

Joplin, be it noted, is the only composer whose works have thus suddenly become available. Compositions of the other classic masters have still to be acquired with difficulty, in ones and twos in scattered albums, usually accompanied by a good deal of rubbish.

'The Sting'

Another symptom of the present-day ragtime boom is the use of Joplin's compositions as background music for the outstanding film The Sting. Sensitively arranged and orchestrated by Marvin Hamlisch, they give an excellent period atmosphere; not of course the correct period, for the film is set in 1936, but this doesn't seem to matter a lot. Numbers featured, apart from the ubiquitous Entertainer, include Easy Winners, Solace, and Ragtime Dance.

The Ragtime Future

When the present Joplin boom bursts, it is to be hoped it will not have lasted so long that reaction sweeps the whole of ragtime back into oblivion. On the contrary, we must hope that ragtime retains its fair place in the spectrum of modern popular music, alongside the various later branches of jazz. Our present generation of ragtime pianists (with very few exceptions) tend all to play the same restricted range of numbers; they must be encouraged to diversify. After the directly-related stride compositions of Morton, Johnson, Waller, Willie Smith and others, the adventurous early compositions of Duke Ellington, so strangely neglected, should be investigated; then perhaps primitive blues, and boogie-woogie. Even Foresythe and the Gershwin transcriptions have their place! So much good jazz has been played, published, forgotten, and is waiting to be revived. Who has played Tatum's or Sullivan's compositions?

But don't let's put all blame on the limited imagination of our pianists. It is for us, the audience, to create the demand that will keep piano jazz alive in all its varieties from ragtime to bop."

****

Hubert Saal in Newsweek August 5, 1974 put it this way:

"GLAD RAGS

HE: Do you like Joplin?
SHE: I don't know. I've never joppled. (Old Vaudeville Joke)

Everyone joppled in Sedalia, Mo. last week."

THE SCOTT JOPLIN RAGTIME FESTIVAL

SEDALIA, MISSOURI - JULY 25TH - 28TH, 1974

By: Pel Bell-Smith

Towards the end of 1961 the concept of The Ragtime Society was being formulated which resulted in its birth a few months later. Also in 1961, the Sedalia Chamber of Commerce erected a monument on the site of the Maple Leaf Club which figured so prominently in the career of Scott Joplin and Ragtime. The monument reads as follows:

MARKER AT MAPLE LEAF CLUB SITE

Appropriately it was here on this site, which unfortunately is now a city parking lot, that the Sedalia Chamber of Commerce kicked off its first Annual "Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival" on July 25, 1974 with a ragtime piano and strings contest competiton with some forty or so performers who enthusiastically showed us that age was no barrier to playing and enjoying ragtime. Needless to say, Maple Leaf Rag and The Entertainer were heard more than once.

The president of the festival, Larry Melton, has in his possession an original business card from the old Maple Leaf Club. The business card does refer to "members" of the club but exactly what membership means is a matter of speculation. The business card refers to Joplin as "Master Scott Joplin, the entertainer". "The Entertainer" was obviously one of Joplin's more popular rags then as well as now, and it now seems likely that the title referred to the composer himself.

The finals of the ragtime contest competition were held that first evening at the Convention Hall and I think everyone who was there will agree that the judges had a very difficult task due to the quality of the performers.

The highlight of the evening was the performance put on by the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble who brought the completely full house to their feet time and time again with their superb music. It is interesting to note that after leaving Sedalia, the Ensemble played the Patrons' Gala of the elegant Newport Musical Festival which is held in the town's grandest mansions. Instead of hearing the normal 19th century European chamber music, the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, conducted by Gunther Schuller, treated the audience to the syncopation of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag".

During the next two days Sedalia burst at its' seams with the sound of ragtime, rare displays of ragtime music and the history of this railroad town, ragtime symposiums, art fairs, and music swaps. Sedalia was full of ragtime enthusiasts who conducted themselves in a somewhat different manner than did the participants in a rock concert held the week before and accordingly the town responded and showed their pride in their ragtime heritage.

Symposiums were held at Hubbard School which featured foremost ragtime authorities. Symposium is defined in the dictionary as being "a meeting for the discussion of some subject" or "a collection of the opinions of several persons on some subject". The participants on these panels discussing ragtime, soon discovered that it was much easier to explain an idea or opinion by using the ever present piano. Hence, more good piano playing, than talk. At least in Missouri, "seeing is believing".

One afternoon Bob Darch and I wandered through that residential part of Sedalia, which was around at the turn of the century, looking for the homes of Scott Hayden, Arthur Marshall, Tom Ireland and others. We were able to find most, and spoke to a number of people who knew some of these gentlemen. We met one lady who told us of Tom Ireland still riding his bicycle all over town in the last years of his life, which ended on October 31, 1963, when he was 97 years young. Tom Ireland was one of the few Sedalians ever to have their obituary appear in the New York Times. Because Tom Ireland knew Joplin, and ragtime, and Sedalia, he was a prime source of first hand information on classical ragtime. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis relied on him heavily as they gathered material for the book "They All Played Ragtime".

Rudi Blesh, whose name is synonymous with the recorded history of ragtime was the "Guest of Honor" at the festival, as Larry Melton remarked in a play on words on Scott Joplin's "lost" opera.

I have not tried to name the performers who made this festival such a memorable event, as I would surely unintentionally miss some most deserving people. On the other hand, it would be unforgivable not to say that, the one and only, Eubie Blake added the crown to the festival. Eubie's performance electrified the Convention Hall over and over.

I also would be personally remiss if I didn't thank Bob Darch and The Ragtime Society's Swedish member, Peter Lundberg for both of their substantial contributions to the success of this festival.

The organizers of this festival refer to it as being named after Joplin and intended to promote classical ragtime through a competition of undiscovered talent and the performance of established talent. In my opinion they were more than successful, and I'm looking forward to the "Second Annual Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival".

****

(Ed. Comment: Pel Bell-Smith is from Toronto and represented presence at Sedalia in behalf of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY. His reporting of event is greatly appreciated. As supplementary information the following is reprinted from The Potomac River Jazz Club's

publication "TAILGATE RAMBLINGS" for August 1974 with thanks to Bill Baker, Editor and Ray West, author.)

"THE SCOTT JOPLIN RAGTIME FESTIVAL

Sedalia, Missouri, July 25 - 28, 1974

by Ray West

What could be more fitting than Sedalia to be the site of this festival? Sedalia is where Scott Joplin lived during the most productive period of his composing career. It was the site of the Maple Leaf Club, for which the Maple Leaf Rag was named. If any one musical composition can be said to be responsible for the growth of an entire style of music, it must be the Maple Leaf Rag.

For hard-core ragtimers this festival, dedicated to Scott Joplin and classic ragtime, joins the Fall Bash put on by the Ragtime Society in Toronto as one of the truly worthwhile events of the year. The basic difference between the two is that the Scott Joplin Festival concentrates on classic rags, while the Ragtime Society Bash covers the entire spectrum of ragtime.

The festival started off with a competition for ragtime piano and strings, won by Bob Long of Los Angeles playing the St. Louis Tickle. Performers at the various concerts were: Wally Rose; Trebor Tichenor, with the St. Louis Ragtimers; Max Morath; Terry Waldo; Jan Douglas; Dick Zimmerman; William Bolcom; Bob Darch; The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble; Dr. Addison Reed with the Festival Choir of Raleigh, N. C. , rendering selections from Treemonisha; and the incredible Eubie Blake, who still (at age 91) manages to gather an audience into the palm of his hand. Rudi Blesh, co-author of They All Played Ragtime, was the guest of honor. Rudi presented to the City of Sedalia one of the few remaining original copies of the score of Joplin's opera Treemonisha. One performance which was both interesting and unusual was singer Joan Morris, accompanied by William Bolcom, doing the ragtime song Pineapple Rag.

One important and fascinating part of the festival activity was a series of symposia, at which the following topics were discussed: The Genesis of Ragtime, Interpretation of Ragtime, The Early Life of Scott Joplin, Form in Ragtime and Composers of Ragtime. Participating, at various times, were: Al Rose (author of Storyville), Rudi Blesh, Jerry Atkins (from Texarkana, Texas; an authority on the early life of Joplin), William Bolcom, Jan Douglas, Max Morath, Peter Lundberg, Bob Darch and Terry Waldo.

Sedalia, now a small quiet city much like Davenport, experienced a rock concert the previous week, with all the usual unpleasant incidents. The conservative ragtimers seemed to be a welcome relief to Sedalia. It was a successful, well-organized festival in an excellent setting, although somewhat hot. The concerts were well supported by the locals, who seemed to regard it as a sort of community project.

Larry Melton and Sedalia, let's do it again!

****

RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

It wasn't so long ago that each edition of this column covered only one ragtime LP and was written with anxious hope that six such albums would be issued in the United States each year to supply enough material for a full volume of Ragtimers. The veritable flood of recordings following in the wake of the Rifkin sessions, the production of "Treemonisha", the New York Public Library publications on Joplin, and the film of "The Sting" seems to justify different treatment, involving less extensive discussion of individual items, in the interest of keeping readers reasonably current as to what is available.

* * *

Biograph BLP-1013Q 'Scott Joplin: The Entertainer',

Selections: The Entertainer, The Easy Winners, Pine Apple Rag, Solace, Gladiolus Rag, The Ragtime Dance, Sugar Cane, The Crush Collision March, Bethena, Combinaion March, A Breeze From Alabama.

Biograph BLP-1014Q 'Scott Joplin: Elite Syncopations'.

Selections: Elite Syncopations, Country Club, Paragon Rag, Eugenia, Cleopha, A Real Slow Drag, Scott Joplin's New Rag, Leola, Lily Queen, The Chrysanthemum, Heliotrope Bouquet, Reflection Rag.

These are recordings of machine-cut piano rolls produced not during the heyday of the player piano but during the ragtime revival. Lacking any specific historical interest, and rather mechanical and wooden in overall sound, they do not make for really satisfying listening. The published versions are faithfully followed, however, thus providing useful guidance to would-be ticklers, particularly on the several titles that have not, as yet, been widely available on record.

* * *

Century Advent USR 5075 "American Beauty", piano solos by Brian Dykstra.

Selections: Maple Leaf Rag, Evergreen Rag, The Entertainer, Sugar Cane Rag, One For Amelia, Ragtime Nightingale, Brun Campbell Express, Cataract Rag, Graceful Ghost Rag, Magnetic Rag, Cairo Rag, American Beauty Rag.

Available @ $5.00 in the United States from Brian Dykstra, College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio 44691.

It appears that this marvelous LP has been around for several years without receiving the attention it manifestly deserves from the ragtime community. Mr. Dykstra, a Ph. D.

(music) in his early thirties, displays complete empathy for midwestern "classic" ragtime, turning in correct but spirited readings of the scores, unerringly enhancing the best qualities of the tunes (you can practically feel the spray of the "Cataract", while the inspired dynamics on "Evergreen" put real stature into one of Scott's lesser efforts). Balancing his program with four contemporary rags in the classic tradition, Mr. Dykstra sensitively brings out nuances that are less apparent in recent recordings by the composers of those selections. Beautifully done.

* * *

Golden Crest CRS-31032 'Ragtime At The Rosebud', piano solos by Milton Kaye.

Selections: Rosebud March, Ham And! Rag, The Pippin Rag, Kinklets, Missouri Romp, Silver Rocket, Harlem Rag, A Ragtime Nightmare, St. Louis Rag, The Buffalo Rag, Pan-Am Rag, Nappy Lee, Chauviniana, Heliotrope Bouquet, Swipesy Cake Walk, Something Doing, Augustan Club Waltzes, Weeping Willow, The Easy Winners, The Cascades, Pastime Rag No. 1, Pastime Rag No. 2, Pastime Rag No. 3, Pastime Rag No. 4, Pastime Rag No. 5.

Also a classically-trained artist, Mr. Kaye adds sympathetic and tasteful embellishments, usually on the repeats, to the printed editions of the rags performed in this two-LP set. These touches effectively build and personalize the performances, adding additional interest to a program already attractive in its concentration on Arthur Marshall, Tom Turpin and Artie Matthews, all master composers whose works have not otherwise at this writing been as extensively presented in one collection; overall feel is optimistic, if a bit academic, featuring firm, light rhythm, Matthews' highly inventive "Pastimes" being rendered with particular zest. As lagniappe, you have Rudi Blesh's literate, informative liner notes.

* * *

Angel S-36075 "Rosebud', solos by Lee Erwin on the Fox-Capitol Theater Wurlitzer Pipe Organ.

Selections: Rosebud, Original Rags, Whistling Rufus, Solace, The Chevy Chase, At A Georgia Camp Meeting, The Chrysanthemum, Echoes From The Snowball Club, Stop-Time Rag, Eugenia.

This instrument lacks the percussive effect of, say, a piano or a banjo; instead, it produces a somewhat thicker tone that, in my view, removes a fair amount of ragtime's backbone. Mr. Erwin plays well enough, and even adds some interesting countermelodies at spots; in fact, "Eugenia" is quite good - gentle and dignified. The whole thing, though, tends to sound like a merry-go-round and wears thin pretty fast; this one is really a diversion for the many theater organ devotees rather than a choice item for dyed-in-the-wool ragophiles.

* * *

Eubie Blake Music EBM-5 'Eubie Blake/Live Concert', piano solos with commentary and vocal(*) by Eubie Blake.

Selections: Tricky Fingers; James P. Johnson Medley - Charleston, Old Fashioned Love, If I Could Be With You; As Long As You Live*; The Dream Rag; Rhapsody In Ragtime; Memories Of You; I'm Just Wild About Harry.

Eubie Blake Music EBM-6 'Eubie Blake Introducing Jim Hession', piano solos with vocal(*).

Selections and Artist: Blake - Troublesome Ivories, Elite Syncopations, Good Morning Carrie*, He's A Cousin Of Mine*, Slew Foot Nelson, The Man I Love; Hession - Proficiency, It's A Raggy Waltz, Mule Walk, (The Many Faces Of) Martha My Dear, Black Beauty, Rosetta.

Available @ $5.95 each in the United States from Eubie Blake Music, 284-A Stuyvesant Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11221.

Society members who've heard Eubie in person, at the Bash or otherwise, will be especially delighted with EBM-5, recorded May 22, 1973 before an enthusiastic New Jersey audience. The LP preserves his introductory remarks as well as the music, effectively capturing the flavour of contemporary performances by this veteran ragtimer who, at age ninety-plus, plays piano like you wouldn't believe. Enjoyable for itself, and valuable historically.

Eubie splits EBM-6, a studio session, with Jim Hession, a pianist in his mid-twenties with incredible technique, whose musical interests range from the Harlem stride of "Mule" to the rather modern sounds of "Martha". Hession's most impressive solo is a mature, carefully developed ride on Earl Hines' pop tune "Rosetta", beginning with a restrained out-of-tempo statement, moving into rhythm through choruses that toss the melody back and forth between hands, and ending with some red-hot, top-speed traditional jazz piano. Not many keyboard artists could hang in there on the same record with Eubie; Hession does himself credit here.

* * *

Folkways RF 24 'Ragtime Piano Interpretations', piano solos or duets.

Selections and Artists: Everybody Two-Step-Mike Bernard; Rufenreddy-Henry Lange; You Tell 'Em Ivories-Harold Willoughby (with unidentified drummer); Canadian Capers-Jimmy O'Keefe; Nickel In The Slot, Coaxing The Piano-Willie Eckstein; Slipova-Frank Banta & Cliff Hess; Kitten On The Keys-Harry Perrella & Raymond Turner; My Pet-Sidney Williams; Doll Dance-Frank Banta; Calico Rag-Vera Guilaroff; The Match Parade-Raie Da Costa; Rag Doll-Edna Fischer; Dizzy Fingers-Muriel Pollack & Vee Lawnhurst; Chopsticks-Pauline Alpert.

Ragtime historian David A. Jasen has done an outstanding job compiling the reissues, mostly from the twenties, that comprise this excellent survey of the relatively neglected "novelty ragtime" style. Many of the best-known composers, performers and rags in the genre are included, showing this extremely difficult, flashy, rhythmic, exciting music at its best. The LP is a sheer delight to hear; when you add the factor that this is one of the few albums that devote much time to novelty piano, it's virtually an essential purchase for ragtimers.

* * *

Blue Goose 3002 'Rompin' Stompin' Ragtime', piano solos by Dave Jasen.

Selections: Shoe String Rag, Contentment Rag, Bohemia Rag, Topliner Rag, Spring Fever, Nobody's Rag, Nickel In The Slot, Good Gravy Rag, Triangle Jazz Blues, Harlem Rag, Hot Chocolate Rag, Blue Goose Rag, Georgia Rag, Blame It On The Blues.

Jasen moves to the keyboard for this one, his best record yet, with some restrained, easy-going material nicely balancing Dave's more customary bright, driving, middle-of-the-road ragtime style. His piano work, played with taste and skill, remains firmly in the mainstream of the ragtime tradition - spirited, good-natured, swinging and personalized (Jasen does not hesitate to introduce modifications to the published scores that will enhance and emphasize his conception of the tunes). Many of us became interested in ragtime principally because of these characteristics of the music, and I enjoy hearing them so well preserved. I think you will too.

* * *

ABC Records ABCX-823 'Gatsby's World: Turned-On Joplin', by Chris Stone at a Moog synthesizer.

Selections: Maple Leaf Rag, The Cascades, Elite Syncopations, The Chrysanthemum, Sunflower Slow Drag, The Entertainer, The Easy Winners, Heliotrope Bouquet, Great Crush Collision.

The Moog seems capable of producing just about any aural combinations you'd want, from those resembling conventional instruments (guitar, organ, bells) through familiar sounds not usually considered melodic (grunts, gargles, flatulence) into electronic squeaks and whines that would put Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory to shame. Such a broad palette would appear to have significant potential for ragtime (and indeed "Sunflower" is a bright, cheerful and unusual performance that works rather well), but Mr. Stone, apparently mistaking ragtime's good humor for an invitation to heavy-handed parody, consistently shows his complete lack of understanding and respect for the material by inserting jarring effects like the drunken steel guitar on "Maple", the distortion on "Elite", the feline mewing on "Heliotrope", and so on through torturous and debased renditions that are virtually musical obscenity. I can't imagine the persons viewed by ABC Records as sincerely enjoying this LP, but I hope that they are receiving considerable medical and psychiatric care.

* * *

Fat Cat's Jazz FCJ-151 'Sounds Of Ragtime and Vaudeville', piano solos with commentary and vocal(*) by Terry Waldo.

Selections: Charleston Rag, Nobody(*), Silver Swan Rag, Evolution Mama(*), Troublesome Ivories, Lonesome Alimony Blues(*), Maple Leaf Rag, Watergate - A Real Slow Drag, Spanish Venus, I Got Stoned and I Missed It(*), Snookums Rag, Tiger Rag, Cheatin' On Your Baby(*), The Entertainer.

Terry Waldo's funky, back-roomy, propulsive ragtime piano is here captured, along with a modicum of noise from the crowd, at a January 6, 1974 concert in Arlington, Virginia. Terry plays a well-balanced program, spiced wi th informed introductory

remarks and highly amusing vocals delivered in a comfortable, easy-going style, all of which makes for entertaining listening. I wish the sound pickup had been a shade better, but Terry comes away looking good, providing solid piano and several seldom-recorded gems.

* * *

Nonesuch H-71299 'Pastimes & Piano Rags', piano solos by William Bolcom.

Selections: Efficiency Rag, Modesty Rag, New Era Rag, Troubador Rag, Great Scott Rag, Pastime Rag No. 1, Pastime Rag No. 2, Pastime Rag No. 3, Pastime Rag No. 4, Pastime Rag No. 5.

Mr. Bolcom's flawless accuracy, sometimes at rather fast tempos and on difficult passages, reveals his thoroughgoing technical training, just as his sensitive keyboard interpretations and informative liner notes reveal his deep understanding of and affection for ragtime. The flamboyance of the five Scott rags contrasts effectively with the delicacy of the "Pastimes", adding up to a highly satisfying album enhanced by unusually good fidelity. One has to admire not only Scott and Matthews, whose scores are strong enough to reward imaginative readings, but also Mr. Bolcom's skill at developing distinctive performances which nevertheless adhere rather strictly to the published versions. From all angles (including a relatively low price), a most impressive LP.

****

JIMMY DURANTE OF CLAYTON, JACKSON & DURANTE

Jimmy, the pianist, will always be identified with the world of ragtime.* The "schnoz" and a lot more talent brought him stardom. Born February 10, 1893 in the lower east side of New York City, Jimmy today at 81 is not in good health. Society member Jerry Vogel, the New York music publisher, sent in the suggestion that a word of cheer might help. Jerry says:

> "send Jimmy a card ..... or a note ..... so he can read them and say - I got a million of 'em..... a million of 'em!"
>
> (address: 511 North Beverly Drive
> Beverly Hills, California 90210, U. S. A.)

*See : They All Played Ragtime, Pages 224 and 225

****

(Taken from the Toronto Star, Wednesday, April 24, 1974)

TEARS AND CHEERS FOR DURANTE

"The schnozzola won three standing ovations yesterday from one of the toughest audience in town.

Jimmy Durante, 81 and partly paralyzed as the result of a stroke in late 1972, made a dramatic appearance at the 39th annual luncheon of The Banshees, held each year in conjunction with the American Newspaper Publishers' Association convention. With more than 1,000 persons sitting hushed in the grand ballroom of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Durante, his voice barely above a whisper at times, sang two songs while seated in his wheelchair.

He wore his familiar crushed felt hat, cocked to one side, and there were moist eyes - and many tears - all around the room as he slowly sang Inka-Dinka-Doo and Young at Heart. Thunderous applause followed each song just as it did when William Randolph Hearst Jr. presented Durante with the Banshees Silver Lady Award as an outstanding performer.

****

LETTERS

Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

Thought you would like to know that I have produced and directed two programs of one hour each about the life and works of Scott Joplin, on the first channel for French T.V.

Jean Christophe Averty
Suresnes, France

(Ed. Comment: We knew and heard they were a huge success! Please accept our congratulations.)

****

Willie Wilson
3851 Front Street, Niagara Falls, Canada

Would like to hear from members interested in the novelty piano (pseudo ragtime) music of Felix Arndt, Zez Confrey, Jay Roberts, Chandler Cohen & White, Joe Sanders, Rube Bloom and (surprisingly) Chico Marx. Willie wonders if any members have articles that might be suitable for publication in THE RAGTIMER, about these men.

(Ed. Comment: See also Tex Wyndham's Record Review concerning the collection of novelty numbers brought together by Dave Jasen - Folkways RF-24 Ragtime Piano Interpretations).

We had to miss the Sedalia festival, as I was playing a Bix Beiderbecke festival at Davenport, Iowa the same weekend. Ours was a success, with a crowd of 9,000 people at one of the shows, but Nancy and I both wished we could have been at Sedalia. I've seen no detailed reports yet, but rumour has it that Sedalia was a ragtimer's paradise.

I am now on three LPs, and I understand that Brian Rust's Wyndham discography goes to the printer this week. Seriously, we found out that the Davenport festival people had a souvenir LP from last year's show available for sale, which includes one track by the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Band, with which I played. The BBMJB also has its own LP, recorded for E. D. Nunn last October, which was released during the festival with all copies sold in no time (the remaining ones, not many, were back in New Jersey and are being sold by mail).

Tex Wyndham
Mendenhall, Penn., U.S.A.

****

I learned of your Society from an article in STEREO REVIEW.

Phil Suttle
Korea

(Ed. Comment: It is refreshing to serve your Ragtime enthusiasm, while you are serving so far away.)

****

Pat Spain Ward
5200 Tramole Road
Baltimore, Maryland, 21214, U.S.A.

Would like to have contact with other performing members. (Piano or instrumental)

****

You may be interested to know that I recently composed a number for THE CANADIAN BRASS called "The Canadian Brass Rag". It seems to be well received.

Eldon Rathburn
St. Laurent, Quebec, Canada

****

Lothar van der Sluijs
Gasthuissingel 12 Zwart
Haarlem, Holland

Would like to hear from a U.S. Society member interested in information exchange about records and possible procurement assistance.

****

SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN - Solo piano in the Brandy Tree, The Prince Hotel, Cor. York Mills & Don Mills Roads, 5:30 to 8:00 p. m. Then leads band in Le Continental Dining Room, Monday to Saturday.

HERB BOUWMAN - With Ragtime and Traditional Jazz at Gastown BANJO PALACE, Vancouver, British Columbia

DON EWELL - at the Life Lounge, 3233 N. Ocean Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with Andy Bartha and the Deep South Dixieland Jazz Band.

JIM KAPLAN - at the Pizza-Stein, 1428 W. Galena Ave., Freeport, Illinois on Tuesday, Friday and Sundays.

JOHN MADDOX - at Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, Colorado, August 19 to September 21, and November 25 to January 4, 1975.

MIKE MONTGOMERY - at The Dakota Inn, Rathskeller, Detroit, Michigan Friday nights.

MAX MORATH - on the road with his new show "The Ragtime Years". October 21 - 26 American Theatre, St. Louis, Mo. November 5 - December 8 Minnesota Music Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

DR. ELI NEWBERGER - and The New Black Eagle Jazz Band at the Stickey Wicket Pub, West Main Street, Hopkinton, Mass., Thursday 8:00 p. m. to 12:00 p. m. (Pianist is Bob Pilsbury.).

TOM NOEL - on the road with his living portrayal show "Mark Twain at Home".

CHARLIE RASCH - with Sister Kate, at Littel Caesars, 15060 Eureka Road, Southgate, Michigan, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

TOM SCHMUTZLER - and the Hardware City Temperance and ragtime Society, at Shakey's Pizza Parlor, Vernon, Conn. - Fridays and Saturdays.

BOB SEELEY - at Charlie's Crab Restaurant & Lounge, 3230 Pine Lake Road, Orchard Lake, Michigan, Monday thru Saturday.

STEVE SPRACKLEN - at Canadian National's Hotel Macdonald, Edmonton, Alberta thru summer 1974.

DAN SUMMERS - and the New Charleston Chasers (with the ODJB sound), at Speak Steak House, Whirlpool St. at Cleveland Avenue, Niagara Falls, N.Y., Saturday nights and some Friday nights.

TREBOR TICHENOR - on The Goldenrod Showboat, at St. Louis, Missouri.

TERRY WALDO - at Engine House #5, Columbus, Ohio, Wednesday and Thursday nights, 8:30 p. m.

TEX WYNDHAM - and The Red Lion Jazz Band, appearing regularly, at The Surrey Restaurant, 1101 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Delaware.

PERFORMERS: Please keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

****

Song
AN INDIAN INTERMEZZO
By
KERRY
MILLS
COMPOSER OF
"A GEORGIA CAMP-MEETING"
F.A. MILLS
48 WEST 29TH ST.
NEW YORK
SONG